The Blank Napkin

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For All Maatrishya's Readers

This story is part of **Maatrishya's collection**, a journey through **love, loss, fate, and the emotions we often leave unspoken**.

Maatrishya's stories are not just meant to be read; they are meant to be **felt**. Each word carries **a memory, a longing, a quiet truth that stays with you long after the last line.**

This PDF is created **by a fan, for all fans**, to ensure that his words reach everyone who needs them. If you have ever **felt deeply, loved silently, or missed someone who never returned**, this story is for you.

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For every reader who finds a part of themselves in his words.

The Blank Napkin

It was the first year of engineering, and obviously, it wasn't the first day of college. The first semester internals were coming up. He was walking to his classes when he saw her. She had kajal in her eyes, a locket around her neck, and was carrying a bag while wearing the college uniform. She was with her friend, Prachi and Soumya.
The moment he saw her, he froze. He could talk to anyone, but he couldn't talk to her. Whenever he stood in front of her, his voice would shake, his hands trembled. And she... she was completely different from him. She was the chatterbox of the group, and of course, she was cute—more than cute word could express.

He went to class. The classroom had three rows. She and her friends sat in the middle row on the first bench, while he and his friends sat on the left side, also on the first bench. It wasn't like they didn't talk, they did, but it was hard to understand what they were saying, that was a strange language. During the lecture, she would glance at him, not knowing what to say, and he would respond by just nodding his head. He never, ever looked her in the eye.
And during the break, they all went to the canteen. But she always brought tiffin from home. In the canteen, she would share her tiffin with him, and he didn't say anything, just quietly took it.
"You know..." she said one day, handing him a piece of roti, *"...you could try talking a little more. I don't bite…"*
He smiled nervously, taking the food but saying nothing in return. He couldn't. Every time he opened his mouth around her, it felt like his words would fail him.

But he was always there with her. It was the second year, during the engineering graphics external exam. She sat in the front and he at the back. Her roll number was 14 and his was 40. Everything seemed the same, yet everything was different.
She had finished all the hyperbola and parabola questions that the professor had given, but still, the professor gave her a C grade. He, on the other hand, got an A. After the exam, everyone came out of the hall. She sat on the stairs, upset, with tears in her eyes. Shreya was sitting beside her, consoling her. He saw her and quickly went over to her.
He asked, *"What happened?"* She didn't reply. He turned to Shreya, and she told him everything. He smiled and said, *"Oh, he gave you a C grade too? He gave me the same. Trust me..."* He tried to smile, making her feel that the professor was just a lout. *"Now, stop crying,…"* he added.
She saw him and smiled. It was the first time he had talked to her properly.

Time flew. Eight semesters passed in a blur of lectures, assignments, and those strange, stolen glances. The conversation during the second-year external exam was the last real talk they had. After that, it was back to, he nodding his head and avoiding eye contact.

And then, the college farewell came. She stood at the entrance of the hall, dressed in a simple saree, her hair tied up in a loose bun. The juniors were at the entrance, welcoming everyone by showering flowers on them. But her eyes were searching for someone as she entered the hall.
It was him. But he didn't come. She asked his friends where he was, but nobody knew.
The truth was, he wasn't coming.

Years later, they met again, uncoincidently. It was the 3rd… no…no, it was 4th of August. He had come back to his hometown. He was leaving a café around 6:37 PM when he saw her. After 20 years, seeing her again made his hands tremble. He tried to hide from her and quietly sneaked out of the café. He succeeded, but then, a sound stopped him.
"Aabhi…"
He froze. Her voice was still the same as it had been 20 years ago. He didn't turn around, just stood there, still. Then, he felt her hand on his shoulder. She gently turned him to face her and asked, *"Why are you running from me?"*
Nervously, his hands trembling, he rubbed his wristwatch and stammered, *"Who... who is... ru... running... from you…"*
She looked at him with calm eyes, sensing his hesitation, and didn't press further. *"We've met after so many years..."* she said, her voice softer. He kept looking at the ground, occasionally glancing at a painting hanging on the wall.
"Come,…" she said, pointing to a nearby table. They sat. She asked, *"And what are you doing now?"*
"Tra... traveler... pho... photographer..." he answered, his voice shaky, his heart racing. If there had been silence, his heartbeat could have been heard.

For a moment, neither of them spoke. The years between them felt heavy, but not uncomfortable. She finally broke the silence. *"You didn't come to the farewell…"* There was no accusation in her tone, just a statement of fact.
He said nothing. *"Tell me,…"* she continued, *"…why didn't you come?" "I... I don't... don't want... to say,…"* he replied.
"What don't you want to say?" she pressed. He remained silent. He glanced at her, then quickly looked back at the table. *"Go... goodbye...to… to you…"* he muttered.
She thought he was still the same as he had been in college. *"Do you want to drink something?"* she asked. He shook his head.
She sighed. *"After college, I went to another city for a job. Every time, I thought you would come, or I would meet you again. But never… Three years ago, my parents decided on my marriage... I couldn't resist it. What would I say? That there's a boy I love, but I don't know where he is now...what he is doing right now…"*
He listened, his head down. She continued, *"After the marriage, we shifted to Prague. Last week, I came to India to see maa and papa…."*
She asked him, *"When did you come back?"* He replied, *"La… last... week..."*
"And when are you leaving?" she again asked.
Nervously, he replied, *"Today... at 7:30…."*

“Oh, I’m really sorry... I didn’t know. You should leave..." She paused before asking, *"Did you come here with your family? Your wife,… what’s her name?"*
He went silent. Her voice grew deeper, calmer, as she realized the silence. *"Aabhi, you didn’t marry, did you?"*
Her face paled. She passed him a napkin and asked, *"Write your phone number… and why didn’t you get married?"*
He took out a pen and wrote something on the napkin but didn’t utter a word. Folding the napkin, he said, *"I... I didn’t find anyone..."*

For the first time, he looked her in the eyes. Then, he stood up and, as he was about to leave the café, he turned back and saw her. She smiled at him, with tears in her eyes, remembering countless time he was there, he helped her, the moments only they knew.
He left the café. She sat there, her head in her hands, tears streaming down her face. As she unfolded the napkin to see the phone number, she saw... that it was empty.
In the background, the song was playing, *"Kaise mujhe tum mil gaye… kismat pe aaye na yakeen... utar aaye jheel mein... jaise chaand utarta hai kabhi..."* and it continued.
The meaning of love is not winning..... But keeping that emotions alive until u die...

~Maatrishya!